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Regarding HB-5427

To the Energy and Technology Committee:

We regret that we cannot give testimony on HB-5427 in person on March 1. This was the bill that was supposed to pave the way for the implementation of last year's shared solar bill now known as Public Act 15-113. It is necessary to implement shared solar. So necessary, in fact, that Connecticut should forego the pilot phase and move right ahead into full-fledged shared solar projects.

The Energy and Technology Committee's own commissioned study by the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering called for a large scale shared solar project. Why has the Energy and Technology Committee not acted on their scientific report?

We deeply regret that HB-5427 states that the electric companies would only be required to buy the power from shared solar projects for only fifteen years. The life of the solar equipment is about 30 years, and by cutting the purchase requirement to only fifteen will make it much harder for developers to get financing and continue running the installation long enough to realize a profit. We strongly urge you to amend HB-5427 to make the power purchase requirement for a maximum of thirty years, instead of the current fifteen.

Eighty percent of the homes in Connecticut are not appropriate for solar panels for various reasons (roofs do not have prime southern exposure, houses with old roofs, houses surrounded by trees, condo associations and housing communities that don't allow solar, houses that are rental property, people whose credit rating or income level are below standard, etc.). In New Haven, the PosiGen company (in conjunction with the Green Bank) has recently started a "Solar for All" campaign. PosiGen does not require credit scores or a substantial income to enter into solar installation leasing programs.. Many people have tried to sign up with them for leased solar panels, and are told they don't qualify because they do not have an obstruction-free south-facing roof. Those disqualified people would benefit from large-scale shared solar. People are ready for this opportunity and the state should not delay its implementation.

The time is right to move to shared solar immediately. It would reduce pollution and help the State of Connecticut reduce federally mandated congested charges (FMCC) by producing energy at peak energy periods especially in hot summer months. At least twelve states (including Massachusetts, Maryland, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and New York) have implemented shared solar. There is a track record and no reason for a pilot program.

Clean renewable energy is a concern of everyone. Especially in the inner-cities, we are already living with an overload of pollutants, asthma and automobile exhaust. Shared clean energy facilities would allow city-dwelling low-wage earners to have access to clean energy and take advantage of the programs just as well-off people can. It is only fair. Since everyone pays into the funds to help subsidize the programs it is right that everyone should be able to reap the benefits.

In addition, this will be a tremendous economic boon for the local manufacturing of renewable products and the training and employment of solar technicians and electricians in Connecticut. This legislation will promote the growth of Connecticut's solar and renewable businesses that have sprung up in the past decade.

Since 2007, members of Fight the Hike have given testimony at Energy and Technology public hearings about the need for clean, renewable, affordable energy for inner-city residents and businesses and for low-income ratepayers and renters. This possibility of Connecticut developing shared renewables will go a long way towards addressing the environmental injustice of the rich having solar panels that are subsidized in part by the poor. We all want to live in a healthy, clean society, and allowing more people to move away from fossil fuels is a great step towards that.

Thank you.

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